



A Monthly Publication for Alabama Citizen Corps Councils, their Partners and Affiliates

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**January 2006**

Alabama Citizen Corps is a program  
of the Governor's Office of Faith-  
Based and Community Initiatives.

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## **What is Citizen Corps?**

**Citizen Corps is a nationwide grass roots movement to actively involve everyone in America in making our communities and our nation safer, stronger, and better prepared for emergencies of all kinds. We all have a role in "hometown" security and Citizen Corps provides local opportunities for everyone to prepare, train, and volunteer!**

## **Let's Keep this New Year's Resolution—Resolve to Be Ready in '06!**



After the in-laws are gone, the cookie jar is empty, and the decorations are put away, we turn our attention to celebrating the New Year. The New Year is accompanied by new beginnings. We scramble to make resolutions, vow to keep them—but many of us forget or abandon those declarations weeks later. However, there is one New Year's resolution we hope you both adopt and keep.

Some of you may be making the resolution to spend more time with family and friends, and we suggest you take that one step further. This year we encourage you to join the national effort to Resolve to Be Ready in 2006! The resolution encourages individuals to help their families, businesses, schools, and communities become better equipped for emergencies. Whether it's developing a home evacuation plan in case of a fire or starting a Neighborhood Watch Program in your community, we hope to better prepare—and thus protect—you

and your loved ones. For easy tips on how to increase emergency preparedness, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

In an effort to help publicize this critical but often overlooked advice, we will publish a few tips each month.

To get you started in your planning, here is **Tip #1**:

**We all know the importance of having a first aid kit, but do you have a financial first aid kit? Regardless of annual income, financial records being in order are a necessity to maintain stability in case of an emergency.**



Operation Hope, Citizen Corps, and FEMA have partnered to develop a simple tool to help you identify and organize key financial records and provide a quick reference file for your most important financial documents.

To access the financial first aid kit, go to [www.operationhope.org](http://www.operationhope.org) and click on "Financial First Aid."

## **Highlights from the 2005 Alabama Citizen Corps Conference**



Mark Sloan had just eight hours to turn the Houston Astrodome into "Reliant City" for 25,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees. He admits he could not have done it without volunteers, thus illustrating the critical role volunteers play in disaster relief and recovery. This affirms Citizen Corps' role and potential in our communities nationwide.

Sloan, Director of Harris County in Houston, Texas, spoke candidly about those harrowing eight hours when he presented his story to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Citizen Corps Conference in Florence, Alabama.

From November 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, 2005, representatives gathered from the National Citizen Corps Council and the National Citizen Corps programs to offer both inspiration and advice. In addition to PowerPoint presentations and slideshows, some presenters actively engaged the audience in exercises to enhance the learning experience. Jaime Dake, Director of Citizen Corps in Missouri, led one such exercise. He created a makeshift emergency Volunteer Reception Center

to demonstrate ways to process the spontaneous and unaffiliated volunteers that routinely emerge after a disaster.

The 100 plus conference attendees included volunteers and employees of nonprofits, emergency management agencies, county councils, and those simply interested and wanting to be informed. Participants left the conference with promotional wear (t-shirts and hats), hand-outs, and a binder full of presentations, tips and contact information. The aim was to outfit the audience—both physically and mentally—with a more substantial understanding of the importance of Alabama’s Citizen Corps.



## CERT Training in Action:

### A Volunteer Shares Her Story

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The Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives was sent the following letter from a CERT-trained AmeriCorps Member serving at University of Alabama at Birmingham that volunteered with hurricane evacuees in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Here is her story:

On September 13 I had the opportunity to put my CERT Training to use when I assisted refugees from New Orleans and Mississippi at the Boutwell Auditorium. It was a hot day and the close to 1,000 people were tired and frustrated. I met a family, a brother and sister from New Orleans, who were fortunate enough to have some relatives living in Birmingham. The family lost everything in the storm and was frustrated because they felt no one was willing to assist them. Unfortunately, the siblings’ parents didn’t survive and they never got the chance to say goodbye. The family, who were all together at the time of the event, will have a lot of mending to do, hopefully they will be able to recover. It was a trying day but everyone was receptive to the help being offered. People are overwhelmed to this day about where they will go or how they will rebuild their lives. There were so many different types of people all in the same predicament. I would love to volunteer again at Boutwell; it gave me a chance to make a difference in someone else’s life.



Citizen Corps Billboard in Colbert County



## Medical Reserve Corps

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### Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

More than 55,000 individuals from around the country have volunteered to help their fellow Americans as members of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). Over the past six weeks, many of these public health and medical professionals, and others without health backgrounds, have provided health care and support services for the victims and evacuees affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. An estimated 6,000 MRC volunteers have supported the response and recovery efforts in their local communities. In the hardest hit areas, and as the storm forced hundreds of thousands of Americans to flee the affected areas, MRC volunteers were ready and able to help when needed and were there to assist as evacuees were welcomed into their communities. These volunteers have spent countless hours helping the many people whose lives were upended by these disastrous events.

Since the end of August 2005, MRC volunteers throughout the nation have served their local communities by:

- Establishing medical needs shelters to serve medically fragile and other displaced people
- Staffing and providing medical support in evacuee shelters and clinics
- Filling in locally at hospitals, clinics and health departments for others who were deployed to the disaster-affected regions
- Immunizing responders prior to their deployment to the disaster affected regions
- Staffing a variety of response hotlines created after the hurricanes hit
- Teaching emergency preparedness to community members
- Recruiting more public health and medical professionals who can be credentialed, trained and prepared for future disasters that may affect their hometowns or elsewhere

The above information was reported by the Medical Reserve Corps. Additional information can be found at <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>



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## Do The Wave!

According to the National Sheriff's Association, there is an easy method for helping citizens in a neighborhood become more alert to crime and suspicious activity—teaching them to wave. The non-verbal communication in a wave serves two purposes: it makes a difference for good and it helps fight crime. The following is an excerpt from the article “Do the Wave” by the National Sheriffs’ Association.

“There is a strategy in the “wave” idea. While you are trained to observe, most people are not and some are afraid to look others in the eye. Waving gives them an excuse or reason to look at people; to notice their clothing, their cars, homes, and friends. Strangers are identified and put on notice. A burglar casing the area will want to avoid the “eyes and ears” of the neighborhood. New people are welcomed and feel accepted instead of feeling ignored, isolated or disregarded. The children and young people, one of the most important connections of a neighborhood crime prevention network, learn civic responsibility and feel included. Long time residents will feel supported and secure. Of course the impact of the “wave” principle will be much greater if everybody in the neighborhood gets into the act. Just get it started and it becomes contagious.”



For more information on Neighborhood Watch, please see [www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org)

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## Holiday Safety Tips

During the holiday season many of us will travel to visit



family and friends. While this is fun and exciting for all, it also presents an opportunity for burglars.



Here are a few tips to make sure your home remains just like you left it before going to grandma's for the holidays!

- Make sure your home looks occupied, place timers on

lights and set them for hours similar to your usual sleeping schedule.

- Have a neighbor bring your garbage can in rather than leaving it out at the curb.
- Encourage your neighbors to park in your driveway, giving your home a true "occupied" look.
- Have your trusted neighbors pickup your mail and newspapers every day.
- Keep window coverings closed in areas where persons can look into the house and see that you are not home.
- Keep gifts out of view of the windows.
- Let your neighbors know where you will be and how you can be reached.

Looking for holiday advice to keep your family and home safe this season? Check out <http://www.ci.mtnview.ca.us/citydepts/pd/cp/tip.htm> for the above tips and more.



## Introducing Fire Corps

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Launched in December 2004, Fire Corps is a partnership between the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Volunteer and Combination Officers Section, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the International Association of Fire Fighters, and the White House's USA Freedom Corps Office, where Citizen Corps is housed.

Fire Corps uses civilian advocates for non-operational related activities. The mission of the Fire Corps is to help fire departments expand existing programs, or assist in developing new programs, that recruit citizens who wish to donate their time and talent. Possible functions of these citizen advocates can include administrative support, life safety education, fundraising initiatives, canteen services, public relations, and grant writing.

To learn more about Fire Corps, or to find a program near you, go to [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org).





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## VISTA Disaster Response and Recovery Team

Tim Bergman was ready to start a career as a high school history teacher in Chicago when he read about an AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) position with the Alabama Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI). The call to service resounded in four other individuals around the country—Ivonne Garcia from Buffalo, New York; Annie Mancini from Rochester, New York; Louisa Lichtman from Friendship, Maine; and Megan Bayha from Portland, Oregon.

Led by GFBCI Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinator, Alison Welty, the first five members began their year of service on November 7th, and are focusing on disaster response and recovery. The team will help design and implement a 10- year plan to end chronic homelessness; set up an Interfaith Disaster Network to aid communities around the state in preparing, mitigating and responding to disasters; and coordinate volunteers and large-scale donations for the State of Alabama.

In the next few months, members will be recruited to serve in the additional positions awarded to the GFBCI by the Corporation for National Community Service. The additional members will help build this project and make it a success. Each month a member of our team will be introduced.

### VISTA of the Month—Megan Bayha



Happy Holidays! My name is Megan Bayha, and I am a native of Portland, Oregon. As a recent graduate from Portland State University, I hold a Bachelor's degree in International Studies and Social Sciences. I joined AmeriCorps VISTA because the anti-poverty slogan echoes strongly with my own convictions. I will be serving with the Alabama Citizen Corps program and the State Volunteer and Donations Coordination Center. I feel warmly welcomed in Montgomery and look forward to working with Citizen Corps members throughout the state of Alabama.

## **Name the Newsletter Contest!**

The Alabama Citizen Corps Newsletter is looking for a name. The person or group that submits the winning name will win a prize and be featured in the

March edition of the newsletter.

Newsletter name submissions should be sent to:

alison.welty@servealabama.gov, no later than Thursday, February 15.

**Good Luck!**

## **We Want Your Input!**

The Alabama Citizen Corps Council is looking for articles, pictures, updates, lessons learned, tips, useful websites and events for this monthly newsletter. Please send any information on Citizen Corps, CERT, Volunteers in Police Service, Neighborhood Watch, Medical Reserve Corps, Fire Corps, or anything else of interest to Citizen Corps Councils to: alison.welty@servealabama.gov. Submissions are due by the 15th of each month to be published in the following month's newsletter, space permitting.

The *Citizen Corps Newsletter* is a monthly publication of the Alabama Citizen Corps Council, a program of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI). To be added or removed from our distribution list, please contact the GFBCI via email at info@servealabama.gov.